

The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian.

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Contents.

	PAGE
Protestantism v. Catholicism (Communicated)	1
Ordination at Greyabbey... ..	2
Greyabbey; by Duket Hall	4
REPORTS:—	
Belfast, First Church; Ballyhemlin; Larne and Kilwaughter; Temple- patrick	6
Obituary	7

Christian Missionary and a Buddhist Priest, in which the Missionary referred to the sinfulness of man and the consequent necessity of a Saviour. "Sinful," exclaimed the Priest, "I never sinned." Here we have two extremes, the man utterly unconscious of sin, and the man conscious of but little else in human nature.

One condition of all progress, material and spiritual, is the consciousness of imperfection. Those convinced of their perfectness are not only pharisaically offensive, they are incapable of improvement and are self-condemned. Most people have a sense of sin or imperfection, that "divine discontent" with things as they are that impels to an honest, manly effort to render them better, a feeling, which, however distorted and magnified by fanaticism into total depravity, is yet the indispensable condition of all true improvement and progress. How, then, are we oppressed as we are with the sense of imperfection or omission of duty, or actual ill done to others, and which we cannot, unless to a limited extent, perhaps not at all, remedy, to find mercy and forgiveness with God, and how are we to bring ourselves into right relations with the Almighty? The broad general teaching of Catholicism, Roman and Anglican, is that the Church, *i.e.*, the Priest, is the only appointed intermediary between the soul of man and God; that it is impossible to approach God except

PROTESTANTISM v. CATHOLICISM.

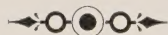
[COMMUNICATED].

One important contribution of Christianity to human sentiment was a more vivid sense of sin. Men, though not more sinful, really have *felt* more sinful since Jesus walked His holy path, offered such a full-orbed perfectness of character, and left a Holy Spirit behind Him. Out of this deep consciousness of sin, no doubt, have emerged under the direction of teachers like St. Augustine, Calvin and others, such exaggerations as the doctrine of the total depravity of the human race, the utter vileness of human beings and their complete incapacity in the slightest degree to rise by any effort of their own out of the condition of original sin, in which it was taught they had been born. In an account given by Sir John Bowring of Buddhism, as presented in Siam, a conversation is reported between a

through him, and that outside the Church there is no salvation. And so the Priest claims to be the guardian of morals and director of conduct in every department of human life and activity. It is notorious that he influences politics, that there is a department of the life of the husband unknown to the wife, but known to the Priest, and similarly a department of the life of the wife unknown to the husband, but known to the Priest, and so even of little children. The consciences of all are in the keeping of one not of the home circle. For many centuries such claims were unquestioningly received in Western Europe and acted upon. Monarchs held their dominions only with the consent of the Pope, so that he could absolve subjects from their allegiance.

An Emperor who disobeyed stood barefoot for three days amid a snow-storm at the gates of Canossa waiting the coming out of the haughty Pontiff to accord him forgiveness, and meekly held the stirrup till His Holiness mounted his horse. And when the mind of Europe, awakened to some extent by the revival of learning, could no longer bear the enormity of such pretensions and all that they involved—the superstition, the terror, the abject slavery of king and peasant alike, the grasping of property, the draining away of the resources of the people, by such expedients as the shameful sale of indulgences to sin, the efforts to bolster up priestly power, plunged Europe into a succession of wars lasting for more than two hundred years. The question of the supremacy of the Church was no doubt the starting point of the struggle, but the underlying principle that divided Europe into two hostile camps was that of the relations of man to God. Have we or have we not the privilege of direct and immediate access to Him? Can we come into direct and immediate communion with Him? The great service rendered by Calvin and the other Reformers was that they asserted the direct immediate responsibility of man to God, the communion, the spiritual contact of the human soul with the Creator. They proclaimed to every soul, every sinner, every person however simple and unlearned, that he or she

could at any minute speak to and commune with God direct, ask forgiveness and obtain it if only they asked with the truly penitent heart, that God himself, acting within as Holy Spirit, would speak in response in their hearts, not only convincing them of their sin, but also convincing them of His forgiveness. And just here they come into direct antagonism with Rome. The system which the Reformers had to meet, with which at first they were surrounded overwhelmingly in its practical dealings with the great mass of men, was to interpose a mysterious authority between God and the soul, the authority of the Church, and as this worked out in practice it became the authority of the individual priest, with what disastrous consequences history only too mournfully attests. The Reformers, setting forth the principle of individuality, *i.e.*, that every soul is in immediate contact with, and directly responsible to, God, struck at the very heart of this perversion, and, to an extent, broke through its environment of mystery and superstition and called upon all and sundry, in the words of St. Paul, to prove all things, holding fast that only which is good, with the still higher assurance of One greater than Paul, that of ourselves, inspired by the indwelling Spirit, we can judge that which is right. We prize this, the foundation principle of Protestantism, the Right of Private Judgment, bound up as it is with freedom, honor, truth, enterprise and progress, discriminating between the Romish system and those born under it and acknowledging that had we been born and brought up under similar circumstances, we would likely have been as devoted Romanists as they.



Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, Greyabbey.

On Wednesday, September 11, under the auspices of the Antrim Presbytery, Mr. Thomas Munn, Moneyrea, recently of the Unitarian Home Missionary College, Manchester, was ordained to the pastorate of the Unitarian Church, Greyabbey, in succession to the late



Rev. THOMAS MUNN.

Rev. John Miskimmin. There was a very large congregation present on the occasion, including clerical and lay representatives of the various denominations in the district.

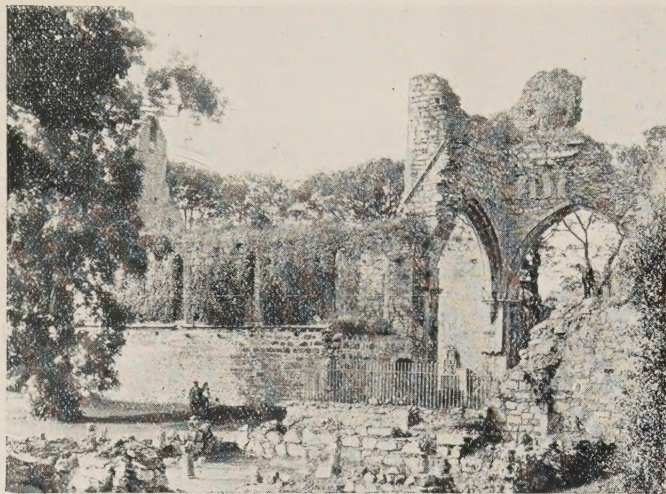
The opening services were conducted by Rev. H. J. Rossington, M.A., B.D., who delivered a most appropriate sermon, preaching from Num. x. 29, &c., "Come thou, with us." After some elucidation of the incident, the double appeal of religion was emphasised, as starting from its cure of physical wants and afterwards passing on to its claim upon human beings as the means of bringing out what is best in them.

Rev. M. S. Dunbar, with a brief reference to the controversies of a former time and the struggle for liberty therein involved, explained Presbyterian principles on the ground of universal priesthood, and indicated how these were at work amongst Non-Subscribers.

Dr. S. H. Mellone then proceeded to the work of ordination, calling upon Mr. Thomas Munn to state his ideas on entering upon the ministry.

Mr. Munn, in responding to the request, said—I think it is, or ought to be, the proudest and most important day in the life of a student when he is

ordained a minister of Christ's Gospel—the door is almost closed on the study of the lives of the great dead, and the approach opens to a world full of living men and women, a field "ripe unto harvest," where the labourers are few. Often in my years of preparation I have looked forward to this charge with fear and trembling, asking myself, What was I to have the spiritual leadership of a congregation? To-day, when I heard the high ideals of the ministerial office spoken of so eloquently by my friend Mr. Rossington and others, I asked myself the same question, and the only satisfactory answer I could arrive at was that God appoints the most unlikely messengers to carry His Word of hope and cheer to the souls of men. Though it may seem old-fashioned, I believe in a kind of predestination, "a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them as we will," and if God did not will that I should be one of His messengers, I would not be standing here to-day; and many a time in those moments of doubt and fear a still, small voice would whisper to me, "Be not afraid, for I am with thee." If God be for us, who can be against us? This is why I intend from to-day to "cast to the winds my fears," and look forward to a happy, and, may be, a useful life in the quiet little town of Greyabbey. I have been asked to make a declaration of faith; it is very hard for one like myself, whose faith is not bounded by any set formula, to reply to this request. Faith is a thing to be felt, and never can be adequately expressed in words. My faith rests on the teaching contained in the New Testament. In it I find that there is one God, the Father of all, and one Lord, Jesus Christ. I believe it is impossible to know God as He is, unless we believe in Christ's life and teaching. I shall endeavour to make Christ's life, in some small degree, the example of my own life, and the example to be looked up to by the members of the Church as the type of life most acceptable in the sight of God. In brief, the basis of my teaching and preaching shall be—The love of God, the example of His Son, the brotherhood of man. I am proud of the liberty of the pulpit I am to occupy; I am tied in no way;



THE OLD CISTERCIAN ABBEY: GREY ABBEY.

yet I hope never to take that liberty for licence and use it as a platform from which to speak forth my own pet political opinions, but to preach the free Gospel of Christ. Friends, I do not bring to my work here any great scholastic attainments. My name stands unadorned by letters indicating college honours, but I bring a knowledge of human nature, of County Down human nature, which will be a good substitute in my work here. I hope to be a friend to every member of the congregation, and my door shall always be open for those who seek sympathy and advice, as far as I can give it, let them be members of my own congregation or not. In conclusion, we are sealing a contract to-day between congregation and minister. Each have their share of work to do. If the congregation does its share, I shall endeavour, with God's help, to do mine.

The call having been confirmed by Mr. Barnes as representative of the congregation, Mr. Munn signified his acceptance of it.

Dr. Mellone then led in the ordination prayer, and Mr. Munn was ordained by the laying-on of hands, after which the right hand of fellowship was extended to him by the members of the Presbytery, the congregation, and members of the ministry of other congregations. The ordination hymn having been sung,

Rev. Jas. Kennedy then gave a charge to people and minister, dwelling on the reciprocal influence these are to exert one on the other.

The pronouncement of the benediction concluded the service.

After the ordination the congregation hospitably entertained the members of the Antrim Presbytery, many friends, and members of the Church, at a Social Meeting, at the Concert Hall, Greyabbey, lent for the occasion by

Maj.-General Montgomery, D.L. About two hundred were present. The Committee, Stewards and ladies who presided at the tables carried out their duties cordially and efficiently. After lunch, the chair was taken by Mr. Francis Wright, under whose genial presidency a very pleasant afternoon was spent. The following sentiments were proposed and enthusiastically received:—"The King" (by Rev. R. J. Orr); "The New Minister" (by Rev. W. H. Drummond, Rev. Thos. Munn responding); "The Congregation of Greyabbey" (by Rev. R. M. King, Mr. Herbert Barnes responding); "The Presbytery of Antrim" (by Rev. G. J. Slipper, Rev. H. J. Rossington responding); "The Other Churches" (by Rev. Dr. Mellone, Rev. J. Anderson responding). Subsequently the proceedings, which were of the most enjoyable character throughout, concluded with the usual votes of thanks.

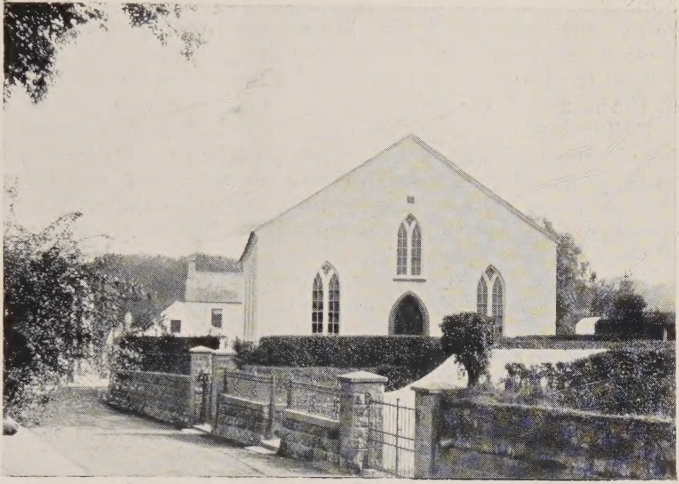


GREY ABBEY.

By DUCKET HALL.

The fine photograph of the Old Cistercian Abbey, which is here reproduced, calls up in our minds visions of the past, while that of the Old Presbyterian Meeting House brings

before us the present. In vivid contrast, side by side, we behold the ancient and the modern. We see in the beautiful ruined Church the symbol of an ancient faith, whose votaries allowed pomp and ceremonial and the gratification of the senses to obtain too large a place in religious life. We recognise in the plain and unadorned Meeting-House the yearning of men's souls for the purely spiritual, divested as far as may be of all worldly trappings.



THE NON-SUBSCRIBING PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
GREY ABBEY.

Over the whole Ards district we find traces of Sir John De Courcy. At every point of vantage there stands a tower or castle, reminding us of this early Norman invader of our province, who "was one of the strongest men that then was in Europa. The valiantest, the fairest, the courtest, the soberest, the wisest, the fiercest in Europa was not his like." He had married Affrica, daughter of Godred, King of Man. This lady being on her way home from the Isle of Man was caught in a terrible storm. Her vessel was threatened with destruction, and in her terror, she vowed that if she safely landed in the Ards country she would build a Monastery. Thus came Grey Abbey to be founded, on the 25th of August, 1193. To dwell in it Cistercian Monks were brought from the Abbey of Holm Cultram in Cumberland. These white-robed residents of Grey Abbey were the representatives of monks, who, early in the eleventh century, founded the Cistercian Order as a protest against the laxity and extravagance then prevalent in monastic institutions. Children of the great Cistercian Reformation, they for years remained true to their original principles of simplicity in life and in religion, but by 1485 they had lost the original characteristics of their Order.

Again and again in religious history has this happened. The fires of purity of worship and sanctity of life have, from time to time, been fanned into strong flame, and anon allowed to die down again. The Iconoclasts, in the early ages of the Christian Church; the Cistercians, in the eleventh century; the Wycliffeites, in the fourteenth century; the Lutheran Reformers; the Puritans; and, in lesser measure, our own Non-Subscribers and Remonstrants have all been, in their several ways, valiant protesters against form or ceremony, creed or formula, intellect or emotion, being allowed to obscure Christ's teaching, to minimise the importance of sanctity of life, or overshadow the glory of Christian conduct and Christian character.

The Cistercians of Grey Abbey, owning sixteen town-lands and two rectories, had to share in the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII. In 1541 we have the last record of the Abbey, entire and unruined, with John Cassells, the last Abbot, at its head. In 1543 all the monks had left the Abbey, and in 1560 they were all dead. After the dissolution, the Ards was recognised as belonging to the O'Neill's, one of whom in 1572 burned the Abbey, lest it should afford shelter for the English soldiery. From them the Abbey passed to the

Montgomerys, who have preserved its ruins with laudable care. Lately the present distinguished proprietor has placed the ruins under the guardianship of the Board of Works.

Following Sir Hugh Montgomery of Braidstane and Eglintoun, there came to the Greyabbey district, a contingent of Scots from Ayrshire and the adjacent counties, bringing to the ancient abode of the Cistercian Monks the Reformed Religion of their native land. Scottish Presbyterianism thus took root in Greyabbey between the years 1605 and 1610. Services were for a time held in Greyabbey, but later on Ballywalter became the religious centre. About 1733 the First Presbyterian Congregation of Greyabbey was established, and its Meeting-House built. James Cochran, Hugh Dickson, S. M. Stevenson, James Porter, John Watson, William Hall and John Miskimmin, have in succession ministered to the congregation since that time. Of these, James Porter suffered a cruel death, "midway between his dwelling-house and his place of worship, close to the pathway which led from the one to the other, and in full view of both," on account of his connection with the "turn-out" in 1798.

The Old Meeting-House was rebuilt in 1862. Long may it stand foursquare to the winds of heaven, a fitting place of worship for the descendants of the sturdy men who brought the great principles of the Protestant Reformation to Greyabbey three hundred years ago.



REPORTS.

Belfast : First Church.—By holding their Annual Excursion on Sept. 7th, instead of celebrating it in June, as in former years, the officers and teachers of the Sunday School proved to their own satisfaction, as well as to that of all who accompanied them to Mountstewart, the truth of the saying, "Everything comes to him who waits," even summer weather. Certainly no more perfect day could have been desired than that vouchsafed to them, and when at 9-50 a.m. a start was made from the Central Hall, in three four-in-hands, all the members of the

party were in the best of spirits, and readily responsive to the genial climatic conditions. No wonder, then, that the drive seemed short, for music and merriment were rarely absent, except when the scenes by the way proved unusually fascinating. Still the journey did not use up all the energy of its scholars, as was soon apparent when Mountstewart was reached, and the willing hands of teachers and friends had made ready a substantial lunch. Then for a time quietness reigned supreme; but the surroundings were too attractive for the children to remain silent long, even though the reward in their case was something more satisfactory than it proved for poor Oliver Twist when he asked for "more." Quickly the party broke up into groups, and if each of these did not adopt the same means, yet one and all achieved the same end—complete enjoyment. For some of the younger members, this consisted in rambling along the banks of Strangford Lough, while not a few adults found great delight in exploring Lord Londonderry's beautiful grounds and gardens, which were most generously placed at their disposal, as on so many previous occasions. Another little band, as if desirous of proving that pedestrianism is not a lost art, even in the days of electric trams and motor cars, set off to walk to Greyabbey, and inspect the latter's famous ruins. Yet, however far afield the various sections had wandered, all might have been seen returning to a common "Temple" about four o'clock. That the latter was the hour ordained for tea, and that the Temple was the place selected for serving it, may have had something to do with the alacrity with which children and adults began to appear from all points of the compass about the same time. Certainly the self-same spirit seemed to animate all alike, and fully testified to the effective influence of a good environment. Then, like giants refreshed, the scholars adjourned to a neighbouring field, to race in friendly rivalry for goodly prizes. Once again proverbial wisdom was justified, for one of the youngest scholars proudly carried off a prize, and at the same time demonstrated that

"the race is not always to the swift," by running her course alone, thus making sure of a first. But all good things come to an end—and a most enjoyable Sunday School excursion is no exception to the rule. Nevertheless, the latter had a glorious ending in keeping with its earlier glories and delights. When the homeward journey was being taken, the setting sun summed up all its splendours to provide a feast of colouring for the seeing eye—the result was a veritable thing of beauty. When the glories of the sun had waned, the feelings found relief in many a tuneful lay, until the near approach of Belfast put a stop to the revelry by night.

Ballyhemlin.—A special service for the Ballyhalbert Good Templars was held on Sunday afternoon, 28th August, when about a hundred members attended. Special hymn sheets were provided, and the singing was most hearty. The solo, "O, Rest in the Lord," was splendidly rendered by Miss Jennie McMaster, of Ballyhalbert. Miss Getty, of Templepatrick (in the absence of Mrs. Thrift) very kindly and efficiently presided at the organ. The Rev. Charles Thrift preached, his subject being: "Three features of true manhood, viz., Sobriety, Righteousness and Godliness."

Larne and Kilwaughter.—A "cake fair" and conversazione in connection with the old Presbyterian Church congregation came off on Friday evening, September 6th, in glorious weather. No formal opening ceremony was arranged further than a few words of welcome from the respected pastor, Rev. James Kennedy. The social function held this time last year was such an appreciated success that the Music Committee were prompted to organise a repetition of the same—not so much from a monetary point of view as for the re-union and social intercourse of the members of the congregation and their friends. It being necessary, too, to provide funds for the different organisations of the Church, the Music Committee are to be congratulated upon their efforts to help their department in such an agreeable manner. Busy hands had provided useful and ornamental things displayed

on the work-table. Country friends and supporters had contributed not the least important items in a fine display of provisions, fresh from the makers. The flower stall was plentifully supplied and artistically displayed. The menu provided at the refreshment tables was tempting and abundant. Juvenile attractions were numerous and interesting. The candle-lighting competitions afforded amusement to many competitors, whilst the knights of the gun in their range carried on a spirited contest for different objects, and the "bags" were satisfactory. A feature of the entertainment certainly was the splendid musical programme which had been arranged, and was gone through at intervals in the schoolroom and the church. Mr. Holmes, the accomplished organist, rendered a number of very fine selections on the Crawford organ, and on each occasion these recitals proved the chief attraction to the majority of the visitors.

Templepatrick.—On Sunday, 22nd September, a Harvest Thanksgiving Service was held in the Old Presbyterian Church. Many members of the Church assembled on the previous evening with offerings of fruit, flowers, &c., and the Church was beautifully decorated. At the evening service a large congregation filled the sacred edifice and joined heartily in the singing of the harvest hymns. The minister, Rev. A. Turner, preached from the text Genesis viii. 22, and the service was greatly helped by Miss Barnes of Greyabbey, who sang extremely well, "Entreat me not to leave thee" (*Gounod*), and "Abide with me" (*Liddle*). A special collection was taken in aid of the Church Funds, amounting to £10 15s. od.

Deaths.

RITCHIE.—September 19, at his residence, 4, Royal Terrace, Belfast, THOMAS RITCHIE, aged 71 years. Interred September 21, at Clifton Street, Belfast.

KERR.—September 19, at his residence Palantine, Doagh, ROBERT KERR, aged 63 years. Interred September 21, in Templepatrick Old Burying-Ground.

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Saturdays—10 till 2.

Assist. Secretary—Rev. G. J. SLIPPER.

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